

Extracts from
More Than Activities
 By Roger Greenaway

Activities can bring out the best and the worst in us

There are many ways in which "activities" can provide opportunities for our growth and development. They can bring people together. They can generate energy and laughter. They can help us to discover more about ourselves and what we can do. They can cause us to reach deep into our personal resources. Activities can bring out the best and the worst in us, and they can take us into unknown territory. In fact, whole worlds of experience are open to us through the imaginative use of "activities".

Something else ...

The stories we most remember about activities may be dominated by the experience of the activity itself - getting soaked, scoring a goal, getting lost, finding the answer - but even when the activity dominates the story, there remains a strong sense that something else was important too.

When young people are encouraged to take part in activities, there is usually an expectation that there will be something else to be gained from taking part. But this something else is often left to chance, even when claims are made (or hopes expressed) that activities will lead to certain benefits.

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“Personal growth can be viewed as making new connections in any of several directions:

- ↑ **upward** to achieve one's full potential;
- ↔ **outward** to make contact and encounter others;
- ⇒ **inward** to increase our awareness of who we are, and what we want, need, sense, feel, think, and do; and
- ↓ **downward** to touch earth, to be grounded, and to connect”

“Personal growth involves:

- increasing the range of perceptions, thoughts and feelings we experience,
- developing new ways to express them, and
- making choices and decisions about the direction in which we wish to move.”

(Giges and Rosenfeld, 1976: 87)

For examples of practical ways of applying this definition to reviewing in the outdoors see:
In Search of Respectable Adventure at: <http://reviewing.co.uk/outdoor/respectad.htm>

Reference: This page is adapted from:

Greenaway, R. (1990) *More Than Activities*, Save the Children Fund

The page (together with other quotations about stories in learning) is published at:

<http://reviewing.co.uk/stories.htm#stories>

Also see: <http://reviewing.co.uk/articles/reviewing-for-development.htm>

Adapted and extracted from
Facilitation and Reviewing in Outdoor Education
 by Roger Greenaway

'Teaching, in my estimation, is a vastly overrated function..... I see the facilitation of learning as the aim of education' (Rogers, 1969).

Going outdoors opens new horizons. It can be a journey into an unfamiliar world - a world of differences where norms and routines are left behind and where people dress, feel, think and behave differently. Going outdoors can also be a voyage of discoveries where people find things out about themselves, about each other and about the natural world.

It is of course possible to venture into the outdoors and discover very little. Differences may not be noticed much, or if noticed may not be enjoyed, and even if enjoyed may not have much 'educational' value. The process of discovery in the outdoors can falter if the visitors are not in the mood for discovery nor have the confidence to be discoverers. They may have forgotten how to discover – especially if they have become accustomed to being 'consumers' and 'recipients' and are unsure about how to be 'active learners'.

It is direct encounters with the natural world that generate the experiences at the heart of most kinds of 'outdoor education'. And it is the interaction between self, others and the environment that shape these experiences. Each of these three influences (self, others and the environment) can be very powerful. Add skilled facilitation to this dynamic mixture and you have 'outdoor education' – at its best.

What do you want to facilitate? A meeting? An activity? Group development? Personal development? Self-directed learning? A learning climate? A learning outcome? Learning skills? Self-esteem? Support? An adventurous attitude? A self-reliant expedition? A commitment to sustainability? Curiosity about nature? Spiritual awareness? Independence? Interdependence? Almost any experience or change valued by participants?

Once you know what it is that you want to facilitate, it is useful to consider any other facilitative forces that could be influencing how things turn out. Amongst these will be the personal attributes of participants, their individually different experiences, the group dynamics, the nature of the activities, and the influence of the natural environment. In outdoor education settings there are so many potentially facilitative influences around, that it makes sense to ensure that they are identified, appreciated and engaged....

There is an enormous range of facilitation styles to be found in outdoor education. This diversity can be confusing. Despite much overlap in practice, facilitation is commonly understood to be less directive than teaching.

A useful 'rule of thumb' distinction between facilitation and teaching is that in facilitation, the goal is usually for people to learn something that nobody knows at the beginning, whereas in teaching the goal is usually for people to learn what the teacher already knows.

In most forms of outdoor education it is likely that both kinds of goal exist - so you may want to move between 'facilitating' and 'teaching'. But even when you have the knowledge or skill that others are trying to learn, it does not automatically follow that you abandon facilitation.

There are many aspects of outdoor education (camp cooking, map reading, weather forecasting, first aid, and many environmental education topics) that are unlikely to be discovered without some assistance. But with imagination, even these very 'teachable' skills and topics can be learned by experiential methods and appropriate facilitation...

This is the challenge for all outdoor educators: to make students' own experiences central to the whole process – especially if we happen to believe that *'all genuine knowledge originates in direct experience'* (Mao Tse Tung). Outdoor education is not just about changing the scenery. It is an opportunity for much deeper change – which facilitation can help or hinder...

'Facilitation' is often described as the art of making things easy for others, but if you make things too easy you risk returning to the spoon-feeding tradition in which learners passively digest whatever the educator wants them to. In essence, facilitation is an enabling role in which the focus is usually on what the learner is doing and experiencing rather than on what the educator is doing...

Search hard enough and you can probably find research supporting your own preferred facilitation style, but you should not be a slave to just one style. Such advice is particularly relevant in the unpredictable arena of outdoor education. You need freedom for manoeuvre, room for judgement, flexibility to respond and to make the most of unexpected events and experiences. The challenge is to develop a facilitation style or combination of styles that works for you and your students and that makes good use of the many facilitative influences that are found in outdoor education settings.

'Quality action and quality reflection on that action are of fundamental and equal importance' (Mortlock, 2001: 119).

What students experience during a review is at least as important as the experience that they are reviewing. It is not enough to expect that the stimulation of the activity will keep students alert and involved during a dull review in which the facilitator runs through a series of questions. Review sessions are an ideal opportunity for enabling students to be more active learners. Experiential learning is based on learners being active, curious and creative (Kolb, 1984). We should at least seek out learners' own questions. When reviewing in the outdoors there is no shortage of opportunities for active reviewing.

Once you discover that you can abandon indoor teaching aids and exploit resources and opportunities in the outdoors for reviewing, you will become tuned in to spotting good reviewing locations and making the most of them. By making reviewing active, mobile and outdoors, the reviews themselves can be at least as memorable as the outdoor experiences being reviewed. This makes the learning as memorable as the experience in which it is grounded.

Reference: The extracts above are adapted from:

Greenaway, R. (2004) "Facilitation and Reviewing in Outdoor Education" in Barnes, P. and Sharp, R. (Eds) *The RHP Companion to Outdoor Education*, Russell House Publishing
Also published at: <http://reviewing.co.uk/articles/facilitating-outdoor-education.htm>
Also see: <http://reviewing.co.uk/articles/the.art.of.reviewing.htm>

Adapted and extracted from
Is it always necessary to review an experience to learn from it?
 by Roger Greenaway

- Is it always necessary to review an experience to learn from it?
- Is not the outdoor environment valued because it allows people to learn directly from the consequences of their actions?
- Surely adventures can be meaningful enough without needing to make sense of them through reviews?
- When learning has already been an integral part of the experience, should reviewing not be seen as an optional feature?

These are important questions to ask, because the experiences at the heart of adventure-based learning can be substantially different in character to the kinds of experiences which feed other forms of experiential learning. The importance of reviewing does seem to depend on the nature of the experience, but to conclude that 'big' experiences need less reviewing, seems insensitive and irresponsible.

How then, should the nature of the experience affect the nature of reviewing?

According to the authors of "The Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators" (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1983) it is "axiomatic" that the processing stages of the experiential learning cycle "are even more important than the experiencing phase". They even urge facilitators to be careful that the activity "does not generate excess data". Climbing a mountain or descending whitewater would surely be just the kind of experiences which would "generate excess data"! There is clearly an enormous difference between a way of working which advocates keeping experiences down to a reviewable size, and a way of working which is founded upon a philosophy of adventure.

....Wherever the ideas come from it is important that there is a 'good fit' between the style of reviewing and the experiences generated by the adventure. This will help to ensure that what is gained through adventure is not lost through review. When the reviewing style 'fits', learners sense its value, and it is then the whole process - of activity and review - that becomes the adventure.

It is when activity and review are working well together that the real adventure takes off - the adventure of personal and social development.... This dynamic form of education depends on the harnessing and intermixing of three sources of adventure:

- the activity adventure
- the group adventure
- the learning adventure.

Reference: This page is adapted from:
 Greenaway, R. (1996) *Reviewing Adventures: Why and How?* National Association for Outdoor Education (out of print)
 The article is also published at: <http://reviewing.co.uk/rva.htm>

Telling New Stories

By Roger Greenaway

New experiences will be more valuable if there are also good opportunities to tell new stories.

Many of our experiences tend to get squeezed into ready-made storylines which don't do justice to the experience. People whose "stories" have got into the papers know all too well how their own personal experience can get distorted to fit what the newspaper wants to tell its readers.

The new world that activities can open up would be lost or trivialised in a similar way if we rush to squeeze new experiences into clichéd storylines.

Stories are more likely to fit new experiences if they are original and home-grown. They must CONNECT...

The value of activities in working with young people does not just depend on what is experienced during an activity. It also depends on the kinds of the connections that are made with other experiences.

We continually come to know ourselves and our world by making connections between past, present and future. Threads and themes help us to draw separate experiences together into stories about ourselves and who we are.

This process stops once people come to depend too much on stories which have served them well in the past, or which have helped them to survive. When this happens, people have effectively made up their minds about themselves and their world: they have stopped learning from experience.

Young people's development is also held back if people around them are not letting them change or grow up: they may have liked them too much as they used to be, or they may have written them off, perhaps labelling them as 'trouble-maker', 'slow learner' or 'failure'.

Young people may be unlucky enough to live in a world of ready-made connections in which whatever they do gets explained by themselves or by others in terms of outdated stories or labels from the past.

Introducing new activities into this kind of world does not automatically lead to more hopeful and open-ended stories: young people may need some help to learn from these experiences and to make connections. And others in their world may need some encouragement to change their past prejudices and allow young people to change and grow.

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Also see: [http://reviewing.co.uk/articles/index.htm#High Quality Adventure](http://reviewing.co.uk/articles/index.htm#High_Quality_Adventure)